

CHURCH OF THE
E T E R N A L

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." —Matthew 24:14

August 15, 2006

Dear Members and Friends:

In July, the sun shone frequently in the UK, and we experienced the hottest month on record since records were kept in 1689. The World Soccer Cup seemed to grab most people's attention, and there were a number of other major sporting events. In addition, many were looking forward to their annual holidays or had recently enjoyed some time away. With this backdrop, it can be easy to see why many people can be lulled into a false sense of security with a supposed "feel good" factor. While the news contains daily information on world events, the crisis in the Middle East, for example, can seem so far away. It's over there and doesn't affect us, can be the feeling. But we know that the Middle East is to be a focal point in end-time prophecy, and the killing continues as the tiny nation of Israel fights the Hezbollah terrorists who strategically and deliberately position themselves in public areas, so that innocent bystanders are caught up in the mayhem.

Last Thursday, the 10th of August, details of the security operation emerged which foiled an alleged terrorist plot to blow up flights from Britain to the USA. The UK woke up to this big news story, and many who were scheduled to fly across the Atlantic found themselves stranded for some time in the wake of massive security restrictions. Reality set in with many people. Significant problems were suddenly more localized. Messrs. Blair and Bush were in constant contact while on vacation, according to official sources. This was big news both sides of the Atlantic. To try and blow up several airplanes surely identifies the mind of Satan who, as the Bible clearly tells us, is the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). Much more could be written on this matter, but suffice to say that this sort of activity must bring us all up short and remind us of the times in which we live.

Apart from the ongoing terrorist threats, many nations are concerned with the belligerent approach of North Korea and Iran over nuclear weapons. We live in an ever increasingly interdependent world where problems in one part of the world can significantly impact the rest of the world. The financial markets are such an example. Problems on Wall Street or the Far East can impact the London Stock Exchange where financial markets are so closely aligned, and terrorist activity can have grave financial repercussions. Recent problems with oil production in the USA caused concern with the price of oil again increasing. Many countries enjoy a good standard of living, but morality continues to slide with a modern replication of the problems that caused the demise of Sodom and Gomorrah. The world's evils continue apace, and we must be aware of what is going on. Wherever you look, there are significant problems. In a way, that in itself is nothing new, but it is an accelerating situation (see 2 Timothy 3:1-4). We live in a world that is on the edge—on the brink of tearing itself apart. That was prophesied, and we cannot be too far away from the time forecast in Matthew 24. Let us never slip into the category of people mentioned in 2 Peter 3:4, saying: "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation." Christ will return as promised, but at a precise time that we simply do not know.

It is easy to be critical of so many who are more interested in the lighter side of life, rather than the big issues that can surely affect our lives. But what about those in the Church? Those of us who have been called at this time are having our chance now, and "...the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). By receiving the Holy Spirit at baptism, we enter into judgment. We know that we are fighting the malevolent influence of Satan who is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), and who seeks to devour us (1 Peter 5:8).

We have to watch, as we are admonished in Luke 21:36, which tells us: “Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” This means, we are to watch world events. But it also means, primarily and most importantly to us, we are to watch our own personal spiritual condition, as the context indicates (see verses 34-35). Watching all the world events and how they relate to prophecy is something that we should do, but balance is essential. Spending all of our time doing this means that concentration on Christian principles and how we implement those in our lives can be subordinated in the pursuit of prophecy. The founder of Christianity instructed His followers in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” That is not achieved by an over-emphasis and, in some cases, an obsession with future events. Balance is vital in the Christian life, and it is not always easy to achieve.

People often talk about the “Big Picture,” but what does it mean? It can mean different things to different people! The “Big Picture” for a politician will be different to the “Big Picture” for a teacher, a policeman or a businessman. They will all have their different perspectives. After all, doesn’t the world revolve around the self? What is the “Big Picture” for a true Christian? Surely this must be God’s Master Plan of salvation for humanity, as pictured by the Holy Day observance. Of course, to make it into the Kingdom of God, which will be set up on earth at Christ’s return, we have to be obedient to the great God and His instructions in the Bible, and we have to grow, overcome and endure to the end. That is the process that we go through, as we cope with various tests and trials.

In about six weeks’ time, members of the true Church of God will be keeping the Feast of Trumpets, which foreshadows the return of Jesus Christ to set up the Kingdom of God on earth. All of the evils that we currently see in the world will disappear when the Feast of Trumpets becomes reality—when Christ rules as King of kings and Lord of lords. It won’t be easy in the early stages for those human beings who will have experienced and survived “great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). They will be totally shell shocked. But with the loving approach of Jesus Christ and the implementation of the right way of living, all that we currently see and experience—terrorism, planned hijackings, war, man’s inhumanity to fellow man, gross immorality and many other works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21)—will not only be a thing of the past, historically, but also in behavioral terms.

Until that wonderful time, we have to remain faithful to our calling and ensure that we will hear those wonderful words: “... Well done, good and faithful servant...” (Matthew 25:21, 23). We were not promised an easy ride, and events in the world show how much more dangerous things are becoming, but that is one of many good reasons why we have to stay close to God. Nothing less will do.

Your brother in Christ



Brian Gale